

Testimony of Jennifer Leavitt of West Hartford in support of

HB 6243 AN ACT MAKING A TECHNICAL CHANGE TO THE STATUTE
CONCERNING ADVERTISING BY MASSAGE THERAPISTS

Public Health Committee Public Hearing

Friday, March 15, 2013

Representative Johnson, Senator Gerratana and members of the Public Health Committee, for the record my name is Jennifer Leavitt and I am submitting testimony in favor of H.B. No. 6243 AN ACT MAKING A TECHNICAL CHANGE TO THE STATUTE CONCERNING ADVERTISING BY MASSAGE THERAPISTS.

I am the manager of a large and very active yoga studio in West Hartford. I am also a tax payer and proud resident of this city. Although I can't be there in person for the public hearing, I did call both my State Senator Beth Bye and my State Rep Joe Verrengia in support of the above bill.

I have had the opportunity to work with and experience the work of Thai Yoga practitioners. Before I get into the nature and quality of their work, let me put the framework, as I understand it, around the original inclusion of these terms in the licensure statute.

It is an unfortunate reality that individuals use the title massage therapist or massage centers to cover for illicit activity. Everyone who has a television is aware of that fact. Laws that tighten and regulate licensure for the practice of massage do so in order to specifically target the unlawful use of this term.

Tightening the regulations around massage therapist licensing to exclude people who would misuse the terms, or, worse yet, use these terms to cover for illicit, criminal, or immoral activity makes sense. Prohibiting the valuable work of certified, insured practitioners does not.

In no sense was this the spirit or intent of the licensing law. And I know that this governing body does not wish to imperil its hard working citizens, but instead hopes to put appropriate guidelines and boundaries in place.

The Thai yoga practitioners I have worked with are not practicing massage in any traditional sense. Participants in sessions lie on mats on the floor, like in yoga. The participant is fully clothed, like in yoga. And the practitioners help with range of motion and stretching, like I do when I assist a yoga class.

These practitioners, my friends and colleagues among them, are certified insured providers. They practice in an open setting, offer their work proudly and are fully trained to do so. They need and deserve this technical change as professionals and as tax-paying residents.

It is an interesting side note that one of the main opponents to HB6243 owns a Thai Yoga school in the Newington area. He has accepted money (profited personally) by training many of these practitioners himself. It is disingenuous and disappointing that he subsequently turns around and takes administrative action against them when they practice what he has taught them in his Level One and Two trainings.

If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me.